



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

# Memorandum

**Subject:** Finding of No Significant Impact:  
Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility

**Date:** August 11, 2008

**From:** James Garland, Community Planner  
Office of Planning & Program Development

**Reply to  
Attn of:** James Garland  
(404) 865-5607

**To:** Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has completed its review of the proposed Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility in Belle Glade, Florida and has found the proposed project to have no significant adverse impact on the environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and supplemental documentation for this project. These documents have been reviewed and evaluated by the FTA and determined to accurately discuss the project's purpose, need, environmental issues, impacts, and commitments and mitigation procedures.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility project is to provide maintenance/fueling facilities for buses serving the rural communities of western Palm Beach County. This facility is needed because currently, to perform preventive maintenance, the buses are driven to the West Palm Beach facility (80 miles roundtrip), a spare bus is sent from West Palm Beach to Belle Glade to cover the bus scheduled for preventative maintenance, and then both buses have to make the trip back. The Proposed Action would significantly reduce wear and tear on the buses, reduce response time to breakdowns and minimize service interruptions, and lower Palm Tran's operational costs. The West County Governmental Center was chosen as the Proposed Action because it met the requirements of the purpose and need, would not incur significant social, economic, cultural, physical, or natural resources impacts, and eliminate issues associated with fuel storage, resulting in annual savings to the County and Palm Tran. In addition, this site is located at a nexus of the existing bus routes and was therefore a logical location for placement of the maintenance facility.

## **Project Description**

The proposed project is to construct a  $\pm 5$  acre Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility with a 7,600 ft<sup>2</sup> maintenance/bus storage building, a parking area for 27 buses and 31 cars within the West County Governmental Center & Correctional Facility expansion area. The facility will house the buses used on the routes that serve the western communities and will house the operations space needed to efficiently manage the western routes. It will be equipped to perform standard daily maintenance on the buses and minor repairs. Additional bus parking space will house the contingency fleet that can no longer be housed in the main facility in West Palm Beach. Conference room space has been included in the design to conduct training for the operators and hold Palm Tran Service Board (PTSB) meetings and it will accommodate emergency operations for the western part of the county, Command Post, during a hurricane episode.

## **Agency Coordination and Public Outreach**

Agency coordination includes written correspondence with the State Historic Preservation Office, Division of Historic Resources (SHPO), South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Public coordination for the proposed action began in April 2006 when Palm Tran issued a Notice of Public Hearing for Federal Capital Assistance Grants for 2006, but no public comments were received. A second Public Hearing for Federal Assistance Grants for 2007 was held but again, no public comments were received. The project was listed on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for Fiscal Year 2008-2012 and approved by the MPO Board. The meeting was open to the public and there were no comments received. The MPO published the Public Hearing Notice on several local papers, at public libraries and on their website. The project has been listed under the Mass Transit Priorities on the TIP FY2006-2010 and FY2007-2011 as well. Every year the MPO prepares the document for public comment, publishes the availability of the document as well as the date of the meeting when comments will be accepted. No comments were received. On June 15 and 19, 2008, Palm Tran published a Notice of Availability in the Palm Beach Post and The Sun newspapers, respectively. The EA was also available for public review and download on the Palm Tran website on June 15, 2008. The Notice of Availability was also sent to the State Clearinghouse on June 12, 2008 to solicit additional comments.

## **Comments and Commitments**

The official formal public comment period for the Draft EA was from June 15, 2008 to July 15, 2008. No comments were received during this period.

## **DETERMINATIONS AND FINDINGS**

### ***Land Acquisition and Relocation***

No land acquisitions or displacements of residences or business will take place due to this project.

### ***Land Use and Zoning***

The project area is currently zoned industrial (IND). The zoning is current as of September 23, 2007. Therefore, no surrounding land use changes will be necessary for the Belle Glade Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility.

### ***Community Disruption***

The Proposed Action is located at a current Governmental Center and Correctional Facility and will not disrupt characteristics of the project area, as described below:

*No displacements will be caused by the project*

*Neighborhood or community boundaries will not be spilt or altered by the project as the nearest neighborhood is greater than 0.5 mile away*

*Service areas of community facilities will not be interrupted by the project*

*Access to community areas will not be reduced by the project*

*Pedestrian/bike lanes will not be impacted by the project*

*Existing circulation patterns will not be disrupted by the project*

*Physical or physiological separation barriers will not be created by the project*

### ***Visual/Aesthetics***

The Proposed Action is located at a current Governmental Center and Correctional Facility campus. The Proposed Action will be located behind existing buildings of the campus and sugar cane fields exist to the south. No visual or aesthetic issues would arise as a result of this project.

### ***Safety and Security***

The proposed bus facility will be located within the expanded West County Governmental Center and Correctional Facility campus. The general public will not have access to the facilities. Safety issues for the Palm Tran staff at the proposed Bus Facility will be addressed as they are currently for the County governmental offices, courthouse, health clinic, and senior center that currently reside in the same complex. The bus facility will not be located within the Correctional Facility itself; rather it will be part of the Governmental Center complex.

Safety and security measures within the facility itself will mirror or exceed other Palm Tran facilities and meet post 9/11 security measures according to FTA regulations. The entire project site will be surrounded by an 8-foot high fence topped with barb wire, exterior and interior security cameras will survey the entire site, and the entrance beyond the reception area will be restricted by a coded lock to allow entrance only to authorized personnel. Additionally, Palm Tran personnel will be equipped with a personal duress system.

The Proposed Action is a maintenance/fueling facility.

### ***Traffic***

A traffic analysis was performed at the Palm Tran site in January 2007. The traffic analysis shows that the Palm Tran site will not significantly impact the adjacent roadway network. The roadways have adequate capacity to handle the added traffic from the bus maintenance and storage facility. Palm Beach County has provided public transportation in this area since 1971. Responding to public demand, Palm Tran increased service in the area in 1996. Any reduction in the level of service (LOS) provided at the nearby intersections for the forecast year 2029 would not be reduced due to the project. The predicted reduction in LOS for forecast year 2029 would be minimal and intersections would still operate at a Palm Beach County acceptable LOS. The current number of buses on the road will not be affected by this project as the current location for bus storage is located on this same road only further south closer to Belle Glade.

### ***Construction***

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action would result in temporary air, noise, water quality, and visual impacts to the surrounding environment but will not disrupt citizens' normal travel to and from the area.

Air quality impacts would be highly localized, temporary and would primarily be in the form of emissions from construction equipment. Heavy equipment movement and construction activities could cause noise and vibration impacts. Noise control measures would include those contained in FDOT's 2004 Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation would be controlled in accordance with FDOT's 2004 Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, through the use of BMPs, and in accordance with South Florida Water Management District Environmental Resource Permit 50-02701-S that has already been issued for the overall Governmental Center and Correctional Facility expansion project.

Construction noise and vibration, air quality impacts, and water quality impacts will effectively be controlled in accordance with the FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. A sign providing the name, address, and telephone of a Department contact person will be displayed on-site to assist the public in obtaining immediate answers to questions and logging complaints about project activity.

Construction activities associated with the proposed action will not affect the "so-called" Forestry Fire Station in the area. The "station" is actually a trailer that is more often than not unoccupied. No public services are provided from this location.

### ***Environmental Justice***

The Proposed Action has been developed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and as amended (1968). No one will be discriminated against or denied an opportunity to comment on the proposed project.

Potential adverse impacts were considered with respect to the following: 1) displacements; 2) noise/vibration; and 3) Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Guidance on Environmental Justice under NEPA.

The 2000 U.S. Census reported the population of Belle Glade, FL to be 14,906. It has been estimated that the population has grown to 22,001 in 2007, which is a 4.28% increase since 2000. In Belle Glade, 70% of the population was nonwhite in 2000; 51% being black or African American. In 2000, 36% of the population had income below the poverty level; 19% of the population had income 50% below the poverty level. Only 10% of the Belle Glade population in 2000, 25 years old and older had a bachelors or advanced degree. Please refer to Appendix 6 for the 2000 U.S. Census report. The Glades Correctional Facility currently has a population of 1,040 inmates; 66% of the inmate population is nonwhite, with 63% being black or African American (from the Florida Department of Corrections website).

The population at and around the proposed site does not have a higher percentage of minority or low-income population than the surrounding communities within Belle Glade or Pahokee, Florida.

**Displacements** - The nearest residential community is over 0.5 mile from the Proposed Action. The project does not require displacements or relocations of any residences or businesses. The project will be located on what is currently vacant land located on the south side of the existing West County Governmental Center and Correction Facility.

**Noise/Vibration** – The Proposed Action is located over 0.5 mile from the nearest residential development and greater than 400 feet away from the Glades Correctional Facility. According to the FTA Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual, Chapters 4 and 9, the Proposed Action would not generate noise or vibrations for a distance greater than 350 feet.

**CEQ guidance on Environmental Justice under NEPA** – The proposed action has been evaluated for disproportionately high and adverse human health effects considering the factors below as outlined by the CEQ:

**(a) Whether the health effects, which may be measured in risks and rates, are significant (as employed by NEPA), or above generally accepted norms. Adverse health effects may include bodily impairment, infirmity, illness, or death.**

In order to reduce the potential for human health effects of long term exposure to diesel exhaust fumes, in January 2008 Palm Tran began fueling their buses with a bio-diesel product. Bio-diesel is a clean burning alternative fuel, produced from naturally grown resources that are blended with the diesel fuel. Using bio-diesel produces a cleaner burning fuel and substantially reduces emissions of soot and pollutants, including air toxics and hydrocarbons. Palm Tran's use of a bio-diesel blended fuel product will significantly reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by buses.

As a further measure to reduce risk to human health, this year, 2008, Palm Tran received 21 new buses with cleaner diesel engines. These engines have particulate traps (Diesel Particulate Filters – DPF) in the exhaust systems which greatly reduce the emission levels of each bus. These new buses have the cleanest diesel engines ever produced and meet the strictest EPA standards. Palm Tran has scheduled to replace an additional 74 buses with DPF technology over the next four (4) years. Other vehicles other than buses, such as employee cars, will mostly use standard gasoline for fueling their vehicles.

The Satellite Bus Maintenance Facility will be similar to the other two maintenance facilities located in eastern Palm Beach County which are located in closer proximity to residential and commercial developments than the Proposed Action. No adverse health effects have been documented for the other two maintenance facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in significant adverse health effects to the local population.

**(b) Whether the risk or rate of hazard exposure by a minority population, low-income population, or Indian tribe to an environmental hazard is significant (as employed by NEPA) and appreciably exceeds or is likely to appreciably exceed the risk or rate to the general population or other appropriate comparison group.**

As noted above, the Proposed Action is located farther from residential areas than the other two maintenance facilities in the eastern County area. The Proposed Action is similar to the other two maintenance facilities and therefore exposure to an environmental hazard to a minority or low-income population, or Indian tribe will not exceed the risk or rate compared to the general population and therefore the Proposed Action will not result in significant risk or rate of hazard exposure by a minority population, low-income population, or Indian tribe.

**(c) Whether health effects occur in a minority population, low-income population, or Indian tribe affected by cumulative or multiple adverse exposures from environmental hazards.**

Belle Glade is a rural farming community. Local land uses are primarily characterized by sugar cane farms. No facilities or permitted activities exist in the area that would contribute to cumulative adverse exposures to the local population.

**Community Benefits** – Public transportation fosters more livable communities by creating corridors that become natural focal points for economic and social activities. These activities help create strong neighborhood centers that are more economically stable, safe and productive. The Proposed Action will allow Palm Tran to more effectively serve the local community. The Proposed Action will also be used for vocational training for the Glades Correctional Facility inmates. No vocational training for the inmates exists at this time.

In addition, the Proposed Action will provide a reliable source for use of excess emergency fuel for the proposed expansion of the Governmental Center and Correctional Facility which is required to maintain a 5 day supply of diesel fuel for back up generators. Diesel fuel may only be stored for a short time and therefore must be used, rerated or rotated on a regular basis to decrease the risk of contamination. The cost of fuel rotation or treatment would render the expansion unfeasible, but the proposed Palm Tran facility will be able to utilize the back up fuel

supply and help offset the costs for the Government Center expansion to be viable. The expansion of the Government Center also allows for a backup 911 dispatch and expanded sheriff substation including an emergency communications center. None of these community benefits would be possible without the Proposed Action (because of fresh supply of diesel fuel needed by the facility expansion).

Based on the above analysis, the Proposed Action will not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.

### ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Impacts***

The Proposed Action is located over 1000 feet from the nearest sidewalk; therefore the facility itself will not impact bicycle and pedestrian circulation. During construction and once the facility is completed, buses and other vehicles will enter the facility from State Road 80, crossing a single sidewalk. The number of vehicles that will enter and leave the facility at any specific time will not cause a significant impact to pedestrian or bicycle use of the existing sidewalk.

The Proposed Action is located in an agricultural field. No parking impacts will occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

### ***Energy Requirements***

The Proposed Action will result in a reduction in energy requirements because the buses that serve the west county region will not have to expend the extra fuel required to travel 80 miles roundtrip to the existing maintenance facility in West Palm Beach.

### ***Secondary Impacts***

The Proposed Action will not result in secondary impacts in the form of additional development spurred by the Proposed Action. Many transportation improvements anticipate secondary development as a result of their construction but the Proposed Action has been developed to meet the needs of the existing development in the area (the western Palm Beach County communities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay).

### ***Historical/Archeological Sites***

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has determined that no sites listed or eligible for listing on The National Register of Historic Places will be impacted by the project. The project, therefore, has no effect on any such sites.

### ***Public Parkland and Recreation Areas - Section 4(f)***

The proposed improvement will not require the use of any park, wildlife refuge, or recreational land as defined in Section 4(f) of the 1966 U.S. Department of Transportation Act, as amended. There are no parks, trails, or other cultural resources in the nearby vicinity of the proposed Palm

Tran project. The nearest Section 4(f) land is  $\pm 1.25$  miles south of the project site. Therefore, it has been determined that the project will not use or impact any Section 4(f) lands.

### ***Noise and Vibration***

Traffic noise level prediction monitoring for 2009 and 2020 was completed at the site of the Proposed Action and while it is expected that future noise levels in the area will increase, these increases will occur regardless of whether the Satellite Bus Facility is constructed. The West County Jail is considered a residence-like noise sensitive site and therefore was considered a Category B sensitive receptor. Future noise level predictions for increased traffic due to Palm Tran do not approach or exceed noise abatement criteria for this location. Therefore minimal impacts were obtained for both scenarios. The Noise Assessment Report for this project is in Appendix 7.

Noise modeling demonstrated that noise impact would not increase significantly (15 decibels above existing noise levels) with the addition of the Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility due to the current traffic and existing facilities. According to the FTA's Transit Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment Guidance Manual, Chapters 4 and 9, the Proposed Action would not generate noise or vibrations for a distance greater than 350 feet. The nearest noise sensitive site is over 0.5 mile from this site; therefore noise or vibration from the Proposed Action will not cause adverse impacts to noise sensitive sites in the vicinity.

### ***Contamination/Hazardous Materials***

A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted on the site of the Proposed Action and it was determined that the site contains no known significant contamination.

During and post construction, the Proposed Action will not result in an increase in contamination. During construction, hazardous materials will not be used. Post construction, standard protocols for containment of hazardous materials that could be used at the maintenance facility (i.e. gasoline, oil) will be implemented to prevent contamination to the surrounding area.

### ***Navigation***

Navigation will not be impacted by this project because no navigable waterways exist within the project boundary. The nearest navigable waterway is Lake Okeechobee which is located  $\pm 0.3$  miles from the Proposed Action.

### ***Air Quality***

The proposed project does not increase the number of buses servicing the area since 1996 and does not affect the level of buses currently on the road. The Belle Glade Facility project is in the TIP. Modeling of carbon monoxide emissions for 2009 and 2029 traffic scenarios were completed at the proposed Plan Tran Satellite Bus Facility site. Predicted carbon monoxide concentrations are well below the concentrations allowed by National Ambient Air Quality Standards for both scenarios, therefore the Proposed Action passed the screening requirements and minimal impacts were obtained. Palm Beach County is in conformity with air quality



standards and air quality determinations no longer apply as the project is now in an attainment area.

### ***Water Quality***

The proposed project will increase the impervious surface of the site due to the buildings and parking lots being constructed. No degradation of surface water or groundwater quality will occur as the project design has met the surface water management requirement of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) (Permit #50-02701-S has been issued). The surface water receptor for this project is the Everglades Agricultural Area. Stormwater runoff will be treated, and impacts to the adjacent water bodies and groundwater will be avoided by use of approved treatment techniques.

### ***Wetlands***

The Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility is located within the West County Governmental Center and Correctional Facility expansion project boundary, which contains  $\pm 1.43$  acres of jurisdictional ditches and  $\pm 0.1$  acres of wetlands. The wetlands and jurisdictional ditches are isolated and do not fall within the boundary of the Proposed Action. Therefore, no wetlands will be impacted by this project as the project is self contained and no wetlands exist within the project boundary. In addition, impacts to the jurisdictional ditches and isolated wetlands as a result of the surrounding correctional facility expansion have been fully mitigated and permits from the SFWMD (#50-02701-S) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (SAJ-2007-3973) have already been issued. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with the assessment that the Proposed Action will not cause impacts to wetlands and does not object to the Proposed Action.

### ***Wild and Scenic Rivers***

No Wild and Scenic Rivers will be impacted by this project. The nearest Wild and Scenic River is the Loxahatchee River located  $\pm 33$  miles from the Proposed Action.

### ***Floodplains***

According to Executive Order 11988, "Floodplain Management," the proposed project site should be located outside of the base floodplain (100-year floodplain). If a project is within the 100-year floodplain, a detailed analysis should be included in the environmental document to determine the level of impact.

Based on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the project area is classified as Zone B (areas between the limits of the 100-year flood and 500-year flood). No work is proposed below the 100-year flood elevation. The proposed facility will perform hydrologically in a manner equal to or greater than the existing facility and backwater surface elevations are not expected to increase. As a result, no significant adverse impacts will occur on natural and beneficial floodplain values. No significant change in flood risk or potential for interruption or termination of emergency service or emergency evacuation routes.

Therefore, it has been determined that there will be no floodplain impacts as the project does not encroach upon the base floodplain.

### ***Coastal Zones***

No coastal zones will be impacted by this project. The nearest coastal zone is located  $\pm 38$  miles from the Proposed Action.

### ***Wildlife and Endangered Species***

General wildlife and floral surveys were conducted onsite to determine the presence or potential occurrence of threatened and endangered species. A literature review was conducted to determine those possible threatened and endangered species which may inhabit the project area. The field survey and literature review revealed that no listed species would be affected by the proposed action though the Indigo Snake has the potential to be present. No critical habitats were identified within the study area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was consulted and did not object to the project with the caveat that standard specifications for the Indigo Snake be included in the construction specifications as there is a slight potential for the Indigo Snake to be present. Therefore, as a precautionary step, the Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake will be followed during construction. These measures include the development of an Indigo Snake Protection Plan and submittal of a monitoring report at after site clearing operations.

### ***Farmlands***

The Proposed Action is located within West County Governmental Center and Correctional Facility campus. The land was previously zoned public ownership (PO) and is currently zoned industrial (IND). Over 700,000 acres of active farmland exists within the campus; however the land was only farmed for the purpose of inmate training and not used for agricultural production. Therefore, farmlands will not be impacted by the Proposed Action.

### **Conclusion**

FTA has reviewed the Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility Environmental Assessment, along with all supporting documentation, and this FONSI documentation. FTA finds the Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility project will have no significant impact on the environment, pursuant to 23 CFR 771.119.



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**


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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

**Palm Tran, Inc.  
Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility  
City of Belle Glade, Palm Beach County, Florida**

Based on the attached Environmental Assessment and in accordance with 23 CFR 771.119, it is the Federal Transit Administration's finding that there are no significant impacts on the environment associated with the development and operation of this proposed project.

By:   
**Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator**

**Date: 08/11/2008**



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August 11, 2008

Chuck Cohen  
Executive Director  
Palm Tran, Inc.  
3201 Electronics Way  
West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Dear Mr. Cohen:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has received and reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) submitted on behalf of the Palm Tran Satellite Bus Facility, located in Belle Glade, Florida. Based on our review of the material submitted, and in accordance with 23 CFR 771.119, it is our finding that there are no significant impacts on the environment associated with the development and operation of this project. Therefore, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been approved.

Enclosed is a copy of the FONSI for your information. Please note that the "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures" regulation requires that Environmental Assessments be made available to the public. Further, Palm Tran should send a Notice of Availability of the FONSI to affected units of Federal, State, and local government. The final environmental assessment and FONSI shall be posted to your website and made available from Palm Tran and FTA upon request from the public.

If you need further assistance, please contact James Garland from my staff at (404) 865-5607, or at [james.garland@dot.gov](mailto:james.garland@dot.gov).

Sincerely,

Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure